

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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OFFICE OF PLANNING

+ + + + +

BENNING ROAD CORRIDOR LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

+ + + + +

MAYORAL HEARING

+ + + + +

Wednesday, November 14, 2007

+ + + + +

Miner Elementary School
 601 15th Street, N.E.
 Washington, D.C.

6:00 p.m.

OFFICE OF PLANNING STAFF PRESENT:

ROSALYNN HUGHEY Acting Deputy Director
 Neighborhood Planning, Revitalization &
 Design

GERALDINE GARDNER Acting Associate
 Director
 Neighborhood Planning

DEBORAH CRAIN Ward 5 Neighborhood
 Planner

JEFF DAVIS Ward 6 Neighborhood
 Planner

EVELYN KASONGO Ward 7 Neighborhood

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Planner

T-A-B-L-E O-F C-O-N-T-E-N-T-S

Ms. Mack	4
Ms. McDonald	5
Mr. Williams	7
Mr. General	8
Ms. Hughey	10
Ms. Manning	11
Ms. Artis	12
Ms. Manning	14
Mr. Scurry	16
Ms. Hazel	18
Ms. Robinson	20
Ms. Ruffin-Colbert	21
Mr. Moore	24
Ms. Ries	25

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P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

6:30 p.m.

MS. MACK: Good evening. I'm here today to testify as a three term ANC Commissioner, from 6A-07. And a resident along the Benning Road Corridor. I support the Benning Road Corridor redevelopment framework, not just because I was a part of the planning committee, I have a personal story to tell.

I, I was a single woman about to reach the age of 30 in 1990. I had a plan. I wanted to buy a house. I was a resident of uptown northwest committee -- community. I saved my money. I found a realty that met my requests that I was looking for in a community. I looked, I looked at the community in Southeast, Southwest and Northeast. The closest community that met my needs was Northeast. It was not the best but it was not the worse.

I went, I went to live -- I wanted

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1 to live in a neighborhood just like
2 Northwest. Northwest Community has the best
3 neighborhood. It's clean, safe, nice place,
4 nice parks, regular transportation service
5 and it has places to shop and they receive
6 D.C. Public Service regularly. In Northwest,
7 the community is still growing, growing, and
8 developing, as today.

9 The city needs to be a community
10 balanced. And having Benning Road Northeast
11 Corridor redeveloped is a step in the right
12 direction for community diversity.

13 PARTICIPANT: That's it? Thank
14 you.

15 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter
16 went off the record at 6:33 p.m.
17 and went back on the record at
18 6:34
19 p.m.)

20 MS. McDONALD: All right. Good
21 afternoon. My name is Calonette McDonald ,
22 Trinidad Baptist Church. And our church is

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1 located in Study Area 1 of Benning Road.

2 And while we do not oppose the
3 Great Street Initiative, we do have some
4 interest that appear to be contrary to the
5 interest of the Initiative. In looking at
6 the new plans that were devised, we are
7 directly across from Hechinger Mall, and the
8 area across from Hechinger Mall includes
9 developments of buildings on property that is
10 on, owned by Trinidad Baptist Church.

11 While we've talked to Ms. Kasongo
12 and Jeff Davis and Mr. Scott concerning these
13 plans, I would like to officially put on the
14 record that, we have no plans of building
15 businesses there. And we understand the need
16 for scale and character but we would like
17 that taken into consideration. And the plans
18 have not changed from the initial meetings.
19 And we've present at all of those meetings.
20 Until -- the plans have not changed from the
21 initial meetings until this new draft. And
22 that is a concern for our congregation.

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1 So we'd like to put on the record
2 that we want to be assured that we're not
3 being included in a set of plans to do
4 something, with property owned by the church,
5 that is not being discussed with us.

6 So, and those are my comments.

7 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter
8 went off the record at 6:35 p.m.
9 and went back on the record at
10 6:36 p.m.)

11 MR. WILLIAMS: Good evening. My
12 name is Darryle Williams. I just have a
13 short comment. I heard this while I was
14 looking at this plan at the library.

15 And the period of public comment
16 is only for 30 days. I think the period of
17 comment, would be appropriate if it was
18 extended longer. Maybe 30 to 60 or to 90
19 days.

20 Thank you very much.

21 PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

22 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter

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1 went off the record at 6:36 p.m.
2 and went back on the record at
3 6:38 p.m.)

4 MR. GENERAL: I am currently the
5 chairman of the Cemetery of Perpetual Care
6 Association. I believe most of you in the
7 neighborhood is familiar with Woodlawn, the
8 cemetery up on Benning Road, 4611 Benning
9 Road.

10 And basically, I would just like
11 to have on the record, a plea and call for
12 support in the restoration of the cemetery
13 due to its historic significance. Both
14 historically as an American and both as an
15 African American. I'm pleading with the city
16 and the public, as well, for assistance in
17 any manner available to restore the cemetery.

18 It's a high concentration of 19th
19 century heroes and founders from this
20 country. From the African American race
21 particularly. But also from other ethnic
22 groups. And I just feel very strongly that

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1 it is worthy of saving.

2 It sat there for many years,
3 dormant. And in a, the appearance of a
4 forest or something left behind. And I think
5 it's too valuable for us to to lose.

6 On a positive side, I think that,
7 that there's a potential for for making it
8 one of the leading tour attractions in in
9 D.C. That's probably our biggest commodity
10 for, is attracting tourists from all over the
11 world. Well, Woodlawn would be second to
12 none when you look at the first African
13 American cemetery. And when you look at John
14 Langston who started Howard University Law
15 School. And really the first civilian of
16 Howard University. And then you look at the
17 Colored Benevolent Association and on and on.

18 I mean, just an endless list of people. And
19 we really need to be teaching the kids to
20 develop character from that perspective. I
21 think.

22 So I, I'd just like to have that

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1 shouted all over. And I welcome any ideas,
2 suggestions and support.

3 PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

4 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter
5 went off the record at 6:39 p.m.
6 and went back on the record at
7 6:40 p.m.)

8 MS. HUGHEY: This actually is the
9 official record of public comments for the
10 plan. However, if there are no further
11 comments from you, we have no intention of
12 actually keeping you here until eight
13 o'clock. And so, we also just
14 wanted to make sure that, this actually is
15 not the last opportunity for you to provide
16 comment. After this public hearing tonight,
17 our office will actually be submitting the
18 plan, the package to the City Council for
19 their consideration. And at that point, the
20 Council will also actually have an
21 opportunity for the public to provide further
22 comment.

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1 And so, in terms of our
2 scheduling, we're tracking right now to
3 actually send the final draft plan to
4 Council, sometime around mid-December. So
5 actually, at that time that they get it, then
6 they will be scheduling their own
7 opportunities for public comment. That may
8 be a, another public hearing. It could be a
9 public round table, however they decide to
10 get additional public input. So I did want
11 to make that clarification.

12 So, I I know, probably for some of
13 you, perhaps this is the first time you've
14 seen the document. And I wanted to ensure
15 you that if you did still have additional
16 comments, that there will be another
17 opportunity for you to provide those.

18 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter
19 went off the record at 6:41 p.m.
20 and went back on the record at
21 6:42 p.m.)

22 MS. MANNING: I represent the

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1 Arboretum Neighborhood Association. I am the
2 vice president.

3 I'd like to make a recommendation
4 that these plans be made available on the
5 D.C. Offices on cable television. So that
6 the neighboring community will be appraised.

7 And be kept abreast on the things that are
8 going on. So more people can come out to the
9 hearings.

10 PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

11 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter
12 went off the record at 6:42 p.m.
13 and went back on the record at
14 6:46 p.m.)

15 MS. ARTIS: Good evening. My name
16 is Brenda Artis. I'm the citizen coordinator
17 for PSA 103, that's the Police Service Area.

18 The only thing that I wanted to
19 say is that, when the book was first sent out
20 to the two areas in the Ward 6 neighborhood
21 down near the Benning Road quarter, it was
22 sent to Miner Elementary School. And it was

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1 sent to the Rosedale Rec. But the citizens
2 was not able to review it because it was in
3 the principal's office. And it was also at
4 the Rosedale Rec, it was the office.

5 So we had a lot of residents come
6 up to look at it. But no one has seen it at
7 the school. So, I guess, I would like to
8 say, whatever there is in there, we have to
9 get the Mayor to send an email to the
10 Chancellor. That when they sent it these
11 public places, that it be out in the opening.

12 Where citizens -- cause we had a gentleman
13 to come -- and I know he would have testified
14 today, but he could not see it. So wherever
15 you put it, it needs to be in a place where
16 citizens could walk into these public space,
17 look at it. Then go back out before it comes
18 out and they have no clue of what's going on
19 in it.

20 So, and that was my thing, the
21 first time I saw the book and the plan was
22 really tonight. Because it has been harbored

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1 in my principal's office. And nobody in the
2 community has seen it. And I know more
3 people would have been here if they had seen
4 the book and know what going on.

5 Plus it was not publicized that
6 this meeting was going to here. If some of
7 the residents don't have cable or didn't see
8 it in the paper. But if you put in the
9 schools, make sure that the principals let
10 the people know, the residents, that it's in
11 the schools, come in. Because a lot of
12 times, they only have 10 minutes to come into
13 school, then go out. So, it needs to not sit
14 up in the, somebody's office, at work or the
15 principal's office. But it needs to be
16 either out in the library where we can see it
17 when we need to see it.

18 Thank you.

19 PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

20 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter
21 went off the record at 6:48 p.m.
22 and went back on the record at

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1 6:48 p.m.)

2 MS. MANNING: I want to piggyback
3 on the lady who just said about the outreach
4 problems, like the city paper, I believe she
5 said. And there was no mention of the Afro
6 paper which is five blocks away from this
7 community. And I noticed that a lot of the
8 community leaders are not here, the smaller
9 civic association, what you need to reach out
10 to. And they said they did a mailer.

11 But no one received the mailer because this
12 room should be packed. It should be jam
13 packed. And no one is here to know about it.

14 So if you put it in the city
15 paper, it's not going to get into this area
16 here. Because the city paper is not along
17 Benning Road. So there's other free papers
18 in this area, that should have been reached
19 out to. Afro-American, again, is five blocks
20 away. And none of the small
21 civic association leaders are here. Or any
22 of the other communities. I'm sure some of

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1 the parents of the kids that go to this
2 school, Miner Elementary, would have loved to
3 come to this. Because it effects them as
4 well.

5 PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

6 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter
7 went off the record at 6:49 p.m.
8 and went back on the record at
9 6:53 p.m.)

10 MR. SCURRY: Shall I repeat-- oh,
11 good evening. I'm Tony Scurry, ANC,
12 Commissioner for ANC 7D-06. And I am,
13 obviously, a resident of Ward 7. And I live
14 on Benning Road. Just beyond Minnesota
15 Avenue. Between Minnesota Avenue and East
16 Capitol.

17 And I have been a part of the
18 planning for this plan, I guess, from day
19 one. And I am definitely in favor of what we
20 have developed. I think that it offers a
21 good framework. And a, a good opportunity
22 for development in the area, pedestrian

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1 friendly streets and just the types of
2 capital improvement that the area needs to
3 sustain the current residents, as well as
4 future residents.

5 I think it has taken in to
6 consideration all of the primary focus or the
7 primary interests of the residents. We've
8 received quite a bit of feedback on it. Had
9 a number of sessions that involved the
10 residents. And the feedback had been
11 positive. Has been positive.

12 And it's going, I think, it will
13 offer the community a lot of things that it
14 has been missing for quite some time; Better
15 facade. Safer streets. New businesses.
16 Better businesses, if you will. Interest in
17 residential development, community
18 development, safety for the children that
19 live in the Ward.

20 And this particular Corridor spans
21 across three Wards, 5, 6 and 7, I believe.
22 So, it is important to take that into

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1 consideration. And also recognize the, the
2 work that all five Wards put into this. And
3 we recognize the differences in the different
4 areas. But would like to take, I believe
5 this plan takes into consideration those
6 differences, all the way down the Corridor.

7 So, again, I am definitely in
8 favor of what the plan offers to the
9 community. I think that it will be a great
10 opportunity for the Benning Road Corridor.
11 And I guess that's it.

12 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter
13 went off the record at 6:56 p.m.
14 and went back on the record at
15 6:57 p.m.)

16 MS. HAZEL: Hi. I'm Janis Hazel.
17 I reside in Ward 7. I formally resided a
18 block away from Miner Elementary on Tennessee
19 Avenue for about eight years.

20 And one of the concerns that I've
21 brought up throughout this process is the
22 lack of bike friendly modes of egress along

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1 the Benning Road Corridor. If you're coming
2 from Ward 7 trying to get back to the main
3 land of Washington D.C., you can't do it
4 without risking your life. So, I'm very
5 interested, as I see the plan, I'm seeing
6 street scape friendly corridors, pedestrian
7 friendly corridors.

8 But I'm also very interested in
9 Ward 7 residents being able to utilize bikes
10 to get to work, to get to shopping, to get to
11 Langston Golf Course, RFK, wherever they are
12 going. But we need to have a viable safe
13 modes of egress across the bridge. Because
14 if you are trying to get across Benning, East
15 Capitol or Pennsylvania Avenue, you really
16 can't do it. So I just hope that that's
17 incorporated. I've mentioned that before.

18 And I know that the Mayor has an
19 initiative. Tommy Wells has an initiative.
20 They're constantly promoting biking to work.
21 Biking for play. But no one is, is saying
22 that for Ward 7 residents. We're left out.

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1 There are no bike paths. You see markings
2 everyday in Ward 6, and throughout the rest
3 of the city, for a bike path on the major
4 arteries and the side streets. But there's
5 nothing in Ward 7.

6 So, I'm very interested in what
7 this plan will provide for those of us who
8 would like to bike outside of just leisure.
9 We'd like to also bike to work.

10 So those are my comments on that
11 area.

12 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter
13 went off the record at 6:59 p.m.
14 and went back on the record at
15 6:59 p.m.)

16 MS. ROBINSON: Well, my concerns
17 are, I'm actually effected by the
18 redevelopment already. I actually live at
19 1409 G Street. Exactly right across from the
20 Checkers. And they're converting my
21 apartments into condos. And it's been like
22 two years already. So, I'm still displaced.

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1 And the only way I found out about
2 the meeting today was because my daughter
3 attends Miner. And a notice was posted on
4 the door. And I asked, "Was it open to the
5 public?" So, I'm quite sure this has been
6 touched on already. But how do the public
7 find out about these meetings? Because I'm
8 sure, I'm, I'm quite positive that more
9 people will attend these meetings. Because
10 Benning Road, I mean, I grew up on the other
11 side of Benning Road. And I'm sure that
12 people will be very concerned about what's,
13 about this redevelopment plan. And find out
14 as much information as possible. Because I
15 mean, it effects me. It's effecting me right
16 now.

17 So, that's all I have to say.

18 PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

19 MS. ROBINSON: You're welcome.

20 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter
21 went off the record at 7:00 p.m.
22 and went back on the record at

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1 7:16 p.m.)

2 MS. RUFFIN-COLBERT: Okay. As a
3 Washington native, I was interested in
4 finding out about the extension of Benning
5 Road. One of the ANCs was primarily the
6 person who took me to it. But I wasn't aware
7 as to how vast this extension was until I
8 arrived here this evening. And part of that
9 lack of awareness was the lack of information
10 coming out into the community.

11 As a Washington native, I've
12 noticed that the areas that is being gone
13 through has a very long and rich heritage in
14 the black community as being a thriving, kind
15 of self perpetuating community. North
16 Carolina Mutual and Industrial Bank were two
17 of the big hubs that when no one else wanted
18 to invest, they were across the river,
19 feeding into our community and keeping it
20 strong. We have a number of black developers
21 and builders in that area. They're very good
22 reputations. And when, what is now

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1 Wachovia Bank, wanted to introduce the black
2 community to banking, First Union there --
3 and I'm just going to call his name, Richard
4 Matthews, there at First Union, which is now
5 Wachovia, was able to bring a large portion
6 of the black community that had dollars to
7 invest into current status and using
8 computers.

9 Given that, it's a disappointment
10 that the Washington Afro or some other
11 vehicle to reach the community has not been
12 used. As we look to introduce development
13 into the Benning Road Corridor. I'm hoping
14 that some of this process may slow until we
15 meet with or in some way communicate with
16 those aspects of the community that have been
17 there for some time.

18 And I'd like to applaud, if they
19 have been involved with Marshall Heights,
20 CDC, for at least reaching out to that
21 aspect. Again, my name is
22 Vanessa Ruffin-Colbert. I thank you for the

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1 opportunity to testify.

2 PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

3 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter
4 went off the record at 7:18 p.m.
5 and went back on the record at
6 7:29 p.m.)

7 MR. MOORE: So, like I said, I've
8 been a long time resident of this area.
9 Matter of fact, I live where I live since
10 1955. And I know some of the place, I know
11 when Benco Shopping Center was built and what
12 have you there.

13 And I would like to add to what
14 the lady just left to, about Shrimp Boat.
15 You need to have somebody in there. Either
16 make those people -- are looked at properly.

17 Paint it up. Or what have you. It's okay
18 where the Shrimp Boat, let the Shrimp Boat
19 stay there. But at least have it in some
20 decent shape. Coming on down, like
21 I said that, this, where the Westbrook used
22 to be, the Share Table it should be a nice

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1 restaurant. It's, it's been closed for many
2 year. And we used to have a good time. I
3 mean going there, taking your family to buy
4 lunch. Or buy dinners and take it home. Or
5 whatever. It's a nice place. It can become
6 a nice place for us east of the river. And
7 whether we are traveling, to drop in and take
8 our families in there. I I I support making
9 that a nice restaurant for where family
10 members could feel to take their families for
11 whatever engagements they may have.

12 Thank you.

13 PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

14 MR. MOORE: And I think, I don't
15 know if my -- Fred have you? Mr. --

16 PARTICIPANT: (Off mic.)

17 MR. MOORE: All right. Thank you.

18 Okay. I back him too. I'm with him. Okay.

19 So I would like to have some nice things out
20 in my area, while you're doing it. Okay.
21 Okay.

22 Thank you.

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1 (Whereupon, the foregoing matter
2 went off the record at 7:31 p.m.
3 and went back on the record at
4 7:49 p.m.)

5 MS. RIES: Okay. First of all,
6 I'd like to see more recreation centers built
7 for the youth. I would like to see less
8 liquor stores. And actually, I would like to
9 see a few of them torn down. I don't want to
10 see another McDonald's. I would like to see
11 more shops that I shop at, like Target, Wal-
12 Mart. I want to see more clothing stores. I
13 want to see better grocery stores. I don't
14 want to just be confined to shopping at
15 Safeway.

16 I don't want to see a trolley car
17 in the middle of Benning Road. I don't feel
18 it would be efficient to the area. That's
19 basically it.

20 I just want to have more diversity
21 around here. As far as, what I am limited
22 to. That's about it.

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PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

(Whereupon, the above entitled
matter was concluded at 7:50 p.m.)

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